EARLIER VIDYĀPATIS

By

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The famous Maithila poet Vidyāpati, son of Gaṇapati, was born near about the year 1380[1] A.D. The name or title Vidyāpati was not uncommon in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries of the Christian era. Some of them attained fame as scholars and poets. Thus Abhinavagupta, the famous Kashmirian scholar who flourished towards the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century quotes one Vidyāpati in his Īśvara-pratya-bhijñā-vimarṣinī.[2] This Vidyāpati, therefore, could not have flourished later than the tenth century A.D.

We come across another scholar bearing the title Vidyāpati early in the eleventh century A.D. His name was Bhāskarabhaṭṭa, son of Trivikrama, the court-poet of Indrarāja III of Manyakheta. King Bhoja of the Paramāra dynasty of Dhārā (c.1000-1055 A.D.), who himself was a distinguished writer, conferred the title of Vidyāpati on Bhāskarabhaṭṭa, who was the great-grandfather of the celebrated astronomer Bhāskarāchārya, who composed his Siddhānta-śiromaṇi in 1151[3] A.D.

There was a third Vidyāpati, who was probably a younger contemporary of Bhāskarabhaṭṭa. He was the court-poet of King Karṇa, who came to the throne of the Kalachuris of Tripurī sometime between 1034 and 1042 A.D. and abdicated in favour of his son shortly before 1073[4] A.D. This Vidyāpati was such a famous poet that a verse quoted in the Subhāṣitāvalī of Vallabhadeva mentions his name in the same breath with Vālmīki, Vyāsa, Kālidāsa and Bilhaṇa. It runs as follows: "King Rāma was described in detail by Vālmīki; the son of Dharma (Yudhiṣṭhira) by Vyāsa; King Vikramāṅka, it is said by the poet Kālidāsa and Bilhaṇa, Bhoja by Chittapa and Karṇa by Vidyāpati. Kings attain fame through great poets and not through the loud sounds of kettledrums."[5] We have got two verses written by this Vidyāpati eulogising the powers and virtues of his patron Chedi Karṇa. In one of these he makes a pun on the name of Karṇa and writes: "Your father's father considered Karṇa (his ear or the prince Karṇa) to be his ear; but your father considered it or him to be even Kumāra (i.e., Kārttikeya, the general of the gods or the Crown Prince), that is the resting place of Śakti. Owing to confusion many look up the *Go* (cow or earth) as the Mahiṣī (she-buffalo or the queen). But men treasuring their intellect or knowledge even then manifest their

[1] Mitra and Majumdar—Vidyāpati, Introduction, pp. 47-57 by the present writer.
[2] Catalogus Catalogurum II. 1, p. 574.
[3] Dr. Jitendra Bimal Chaudhuri—Padyāmṛta-taraṅgiṇī, Introduction pp. 212-213.
[4] The Struggle for Empire (Bhāratīya Vidya Bhavan), pp. 62-63 for the date
[5] Sbhv. 186 by an anonymous poet, edited by Peterson.

boldness in order to discern the reality of the universe."[6] This verse throws some light on the position of Karṇa in the reigns of his grandfather, Kokalla II and his father Gāṅgeyadeva Vikramāditya. Karṇa must have been old enough to collect information and report them to Kokalla II, who is described here as seeing through Karṇa. Gāṅgeyadeva, who led expeditions to the Deccan, Kośala, Utkala, Aṅga or Bhagalpore, and to the Kangra Valley, then under occupation of the Muslims, must have got substantial help from his son, who is compared here to the veritable general of the gods.

In another verse, Vidyāpati contrasts the achievements of Karṇa to those of his adversaries thus: "You go two or three steps, while your foes go skipping over the earth (that is, they leave the world altogether); you release ten or five arrows, while they shed much blood; they are lords of goddesses (in the other world) having been killed with your sword, while you are lord of women (in this world); they deserve to be spoken ill of; Oh, Karṇa! how can you be described?"[7] This verse has also been quoted in the Subhāṣitāvalī,[8] but is ascribed to one Deccan poet. Was this Vidyāpati a southerner?

Śrīdharadāsa compiled his Saduktikarṇāmṛta on the 11th February, 1206 A.D., that is, at least 174 years before the birth of the Maithila poet Vidyāpati. He has quoted as many as five verses of one Vidyāpati. As two of these verses were eulogies of Karṇa, it is highly probable that the three other verses quoted by Śrīdharadāsa were also composed by the court-poet of Karṇa. It may be mentioned in this connection that Kṛṣṇa-miśra in his Prabodha-chandrodaya refers to this Karṇa as having defeated the Chandella ruler Kīrttivarman some time after 1051 A.D. This Vidyāpati took pleasure in ridiculing the vanity of a scholar thus: "We have been born as neighbours of knowers of words (grammarians); the experts in Vedas know us; we have resorted to the caravan of the learned men going along the path of the six rites; we have been seen for a long time by the learning of the poets with the closed third part of their eyes shaped like buds; how should we know that a person like you would be an altogether different sort of touchstone (that is, you do not recognise our merit, while other scholars do)?".[9]

Śrīdharadāsa ascribes to Vidyāpati a verse, which, according to the Śārṅgadharapaddhati[10], was written by Mālava Rudra. This verse describes how Agastya drank off the ocean and states: "We with our minds agitated with thirst resorted to the ocean (with the idea) that he is the one abode of waters, that he is the mine of gems, who knows that the sage will drink in a moment the ocean, placed on the hollow of the cup of his hand together with the fatiguing whales and crocodiles[11]."

[6] Saduktikarṇāmṛta III. 54.2. We are grateful to Dr. Tarapada Chaudhury for the translation of such difficult verses.
[7] *Ibid.* III. 13.4.
[8] Sbhv. Peterson, No. 2516.
[9] Saduktikarṇāmṛta III. 3.2.
[10] SP. No. 1091.
[11] Saduktikarṇāmṛta IV. 9.3.

Another poem attributed by Śrīdharadāsa to this Vidyāpati bears a very close resemblance to some of the verses written by the Maithila poet Vidyāpati. It compares a lover anxious to enjoy a girl who has not attained her puberty with a bee, who is thus admonished: "Oh bee, divert your restive mind to other flower-creepers which can bear violation. Why do you prematurely torture in vain the *Mugdhā*, innocent or beautiful bud of Navamallikā in which *Rajas*, pollens or sign of womanhood has not yet grown?",[12] In the Śārṅgadharapaddhati[13] and Subhāṣitāvalī,[14] however, this has been ascribed to the poetess Vikaṭanitambā. The Maithila poet Vidyāpati has written: जाव न मालति कर परगास
तावे न ताहि मधुकर विलास।
and again मुन्दला मुकुल कथए मकरन्द[15]

In about 1363 A.D. the Śārṅgadharapaddhati was compiled by Śārṅgadhara, grandson of Rāghava, a poet patronised by King Hammīra Chāhamāna of Śākambharī, Seopur (Gwalior) and Balvan (Kotah), who died in 1301 A.D. In this work four verses attributed to one Vidyāpati have been quoted. This Vidyāpati was certainly not the Maithila Vidyāpati, as he was born about one generation later. He was either the court-poet of Karṇa or the protegee of Bhoja Paramāra.

One of these verses is didactic in character, condemning persons who run after riches. Meru is said to be the depository of gold. The poet says: "For those whose mind is awakened with the pleasure of contentment, Meru is not different from earth; for others, whose minds are crowded with allurement of riches, Meru is far off; for whose sake then has the creator made that sort of resort of wealth ? Meru whose greatness of gold is confined to itself does not appeal to me."[16] This Vidyāpati upholds the view that a single outstanding qualification may nullify many disqualifications. In this verse on Musk he writes: "The birth place is not certainly clean; the colour is not fit to be described; if a person decorates his body with it, he looks from a distance as if covered with mud, although it is so, who knows what indescribable virtue of perfume which robs the praise of all fragrant things the musk has."[17] This verse has also been quoted by Jalhaṇa in his Śuktimuktāvalī[18] and by Haribhāskara in his Padyāmṛitataraṅgiṇī.[19]

Another verse of this Vidyāpati quoted by Śārṅgadhara describes the entreaties of a lover to his lady-love who has been cross with him: "Oh you with excellent eye-brows; since you are angry, I have discarded food, given up all talks about women, avoided fragrance like garlands, scents, incense etc. Oh loving one; give up the redness (of the face) while I have bowed down to you. Be pleased now. Oh lovely one ! in separation from

12 *Ibid.* IV. 28.2.
13 SP. No. 823.
14 Sbhv. No. 735.
15 Vidyāpati, Mitra and Majumdar, Pada No. 58.
16 Śārṅgadharapaddhati No. 1065.
17 *Ibid.* No. 1202.
18 Śuktimuktāvalī, V. 47.
19 Padyāmṛita-taraṅgiṇī, No. 256.

you all the quarters have become at once dark to me."[20] In another verse this poet draws a pen-picture of a lady going out in a dark rainy night to meet her lover. When the lightening made her form visible she entreated it to be more sympathetic, because of the common bond of belonging to the same fair sex. She says: "Let the winds variegated with the pollens of *Kadamba* flower blow; let the enemies of serpents (peacocks) dance, let the energetic clouds heavy with the weight of new water emit noise, seeing me with a distressed face sunk in the ocean of grief due to the separation from my lover, why do you oh cruel lightening quiver, though the womanhood is common (to us both)."[21] The Maithila Vidyāpati has improved upon this and has written excellent poems on the lady going out to meet her lover in the rainy night amidst mud, serpents, thunders in roads infested with rogues.[22]

Lastly we find a Bengali Vidyāpati flourishing in the last quarter of the twelfth century. Jinapāla in his Kharataragachchha-paṭṭāvalī states that the poets, Vidyāpati Gauḍa and Vāgīśvara Janārdana, visited the court of Pṛithvīrāja III (c. 1178-1192 A.D.), the famous antagonist of Muhammad Ghūrī.[23]

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[20] Sārṅgadharapaddhati No. 3556

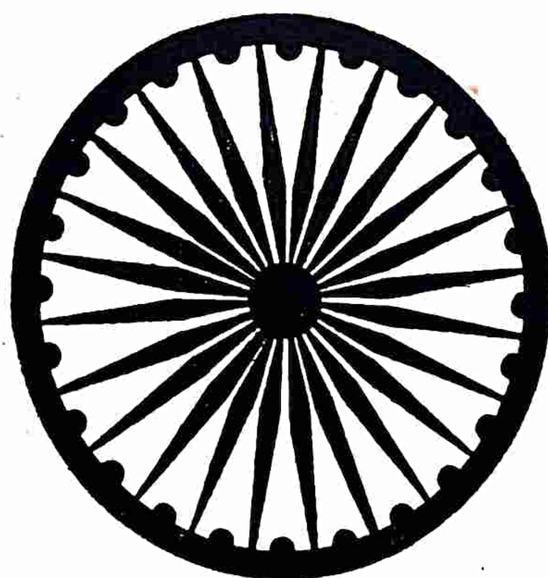
[21] *Ibid.* No. 3901.

[22] Mitra and Majumdar: Vidyāpati, Pada Nos. 104, 105, 106, 328-330, 331, 333 etc. specially, (विजुरी तरङ्ग डराइ)

[23] The Struggle for Empire, p. 109.

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